

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6519
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SUBJ: ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE ON SRV-PRC TENSIONS
ATTRIBUTED TO US EMBASSY BANGKOK ANALYSIS

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF JUNE 19 ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL
ARTICLE, DATED MANILA, BY SETH LIPSKY ENTITLED
"AMBASSADOR SEES CHANCE FOR U.S. TO INFLUENCE HANOI."

2. QTE THE CRISIS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND
VIETNAM PROVIDES THE U.S. WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO OAIN
INFLUENCE IN HANOI, THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN THAILAND HAS
TOLD WASHINGTON.

3. QTE IN ADDITION, THE EMBASSY SUGGESTED THE U.S.
MIGHT WANT TO DISCUSS WITH PEKING A NUMBER OF ISSUES
RELATED TO THE RAPIDLY INCREASING STREAM OF VIETNAM'S
CHINESE RESIDENTS FLEEING TO CHINA.

3. QTE THE EMBASSY'S VIEWS ARE THE FIRST TO SURFACE
FROM AMERICAN DIPLOMATS IN THE FIELD SINCE CHINA
AND VIETNAM BEGIN OPENLY FEUDING OVER A NUMBER OF
ISSUES. THE VIEWS ARE CONTAINED IN A CONFIDENTIAL
CABLE FROM THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, CHARLES S.
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WHITEHOUSE, TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN
WASHINGTON AND TO ABOUT A DOZEN DIPLOMATIC
POSTS IN ASIA AND ELSEWHERE. ALTHOUGH MR. WHITEHOUSE'S
CABLE DOESN'T CONTAIN ANY STARTLING DIS-
CLOSURES, IT PROVIDES A GLIMPSE OF HOW A KEY AMERICAN
LISTENING POST PERCEIVES THE ISSUES IN AN IMPORTANT
CONFRONTATION IN ASIA.

4. QTE IN HIS CABLE, MR. WHITEHOUSE SAID THE EMBASSY'S ANALYSIS IS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH REFUGEES AND DISCUSSIONS WITH DIPLOMATS, JOURNALISTS, "UNOFFICIALS" AND OTHER RECENTLY ARRIVED FROM VIETNAM, AS WELL AS FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH DIPLOMATS BASED IN BANGKOK WHO ARE IN TOUCH WITH VISITORS TO VIETNAM. HE TERMED THE ANALYSIS "SPECULATIVE," SAYING NO DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE PRINCIPALS HAD BEEN MADE. THAILAND IS A KEY CENTER FOR WATCHING VIETNAM FOR THE U.S. AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS. MR. WHITEHOUSE HAS SERVED EXTENSIVELY IN THE AREA. INCLUDING POSTS IN VIETNAM AND AS U.S. AMBASSADOR TO LAOS.

5. QTE ACCORDING TO MR. WHITEHOUSE'S CABLE, THE STRAIN IN RELATIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CHINA COULD GIVE LEVERAGE TO THOSE IN HANOI WHO FAVOR ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH WASHINGTON WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS. SUCH A PROSPECT STEMS FROM THE LIKEHOOD THAT THE VIETNAMESE LEADERS DON'T WANT TO SEE THE SOVIET UNION TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HANOI'S FEUD WITH PEKING BY EXPANDING ITS ALREADY CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE IN VIETNAM. MR. WHITEHOUSE SAID THE U.S. IS THE "UNIQUE COUNTER" TO SUCH A DEVELOPMENT, BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND POLITICALLY. THE CRISIS, HE SAID, PROVIDES THE U.S. WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN SOME "DIRECT" INFLUENCE IN VIETNAM.

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6. QTE EXACTLY HOW THE U.S. MIGHT GAIN SUCH INFLUENCE, MR. WHITEHOUSE'S CABLE DOESN'T SAY. BUT IT DRAWS AN IRONIC SKETCH OF THE BACKGROUND TO THE FEUD BETWEEN CHINA AND VIETNAM. IT SUGGESTS THE RIGHT (SIC; PRESUMABLY RIFT) BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES DEVELOPED PARTLY FROM A FAILURE BY HANOI, AS IT EXECUTED A POLICY OF SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION, TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CHINA'S REACTION TO ANTI-CAPITALIST MEASURES IN THE SOUTH BECAUSE MANY OF THE CAPITALISTS IN THE SOUTH ARE CHINESE VIETNAMESE, THE ANTI-CAPITALIST MEASURES APPEARED TO HAVE DEGENERATED INTO ANTI-CHINESE POLICIES, OR AT LEAST WERE SO REGARDED BY CHINA AND MANY CHINESE RESIDENTS OF VIETNAM.

7. QTE MR. WHITEHOUSE'S CABLE SAYS THE NORTHERN ASPECTS OF THE AFFAIR -- AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO ACTIONS IN NORTHERN VIETNAM - AREN'T CLEAR TO THE U.S. EMBASSY IN THAILAND. BUT HE SAID THE EMBASSY CONCLUDED THAT HANOI ACTED "PRECIPITATELY" AGAINST THE CAPITALISTS IN THE SOUTH, AROUSING "ACUTE ANXIETY" IN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN BOTH THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY IN BOTH THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN

PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. HE SAYS THE EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT HANOI INITIALLY INTENDED TO FORCE LARGE NUMBERS OF CHINESE TO LEAVE VIETNAM, BUT THAT PRESSURES WITHIN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN VIETNAM EVENTUALLY LED HANOI TO ACQUIESCE TO THE EXODUS.

8. QTE THE NUMBER OF CHINESE RESIDENTS FLEEING THE COUNTRY, BY BOAT AND OVERLAND, HAS REACHED TENS OF THOUSANDS. THE EXODUS WAS SPURRED NOT ONLY BY THE DRIVE AGAINST CAPITALISTS WITHIN VIETNAM, THE U.S. EMBASSY IN THAILAND BELIEVES, BUT BY RISING TENSIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CHINA OVER THE VIETNAM-CAMBODIA BORDER WAR, RUMORS OF CONFLICT
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BETWEEN CHINA AND VIETNAM AND RUMORS OF PERSECUTION OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY. SUCH RUMORS, THE EMBASSY CABLE SAID, WERE "SEEMINGLY SPREAD" BY AGENTS OF PEKING IN VIETNAM. IN ADDITION, ORDERS TO GO TO VIETNAM'S NEW ECONOMIC ZONES HELPED SPUR THE EXODUS, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES.

ROOTS OF DISCORD

9. QTE NEVERTHELESS, THE U.S. EMBASSY CABLE SAID, THE CRISIS OVER THE CHINESE EXODUS FROM VIETNAM IS MERELY SYMPTOMATIC, RATHER THAN A ROOT

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6520
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 11)

CAUSE, OF THE GROWING ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE ROOT CAUSE, THE EMBASSY SUGGESTS, STEMS MORE THAN(SIC) FROM PEKING'S DISAPPROVAL OF HANOI'S TIES WITH THE SOVIET UNION. THE EMBASSY SEES THE SOVIET ROLE IN VIETNAM AND THE PARALLELS BETWEEN VIETNAMESE AND SOVIET POLICY ON INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS AS "GAGLING" TO PEKING.

10. QTE PEKING'S CONCERN HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED, THE EMBASSY SAYS, BY RUMORS THAT HANOI HAS PERMITTED THE SOVIETS TO USE CAM RANH BAY, THE BIG FORMER U.S. NAVAL BASE IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF VIEHNAME PEKING, IT SAYS, ALSO APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN "INCREASINGLY DISTURBED" OVER HANOI'S REGIONAL POLICIES, INCLUDING ITS DOMINANT ROLE IN LAOS AND ITS FIGHT WITH CAMBODIA.

11. QTE PEKING COULD HAVE WAITED UNTIL HANOI BECAME DISILLUSIONED WITH ZHEAVY-HANDED SOVIET BEHAVIOR," MR. WHITEHOUSE'S CABLE SAID. BUT THE IMMEDIATE THREAT TO CAMBODIA AND SIGNS THAT HANOI WANTED TO EXCLUDE CHINESE FROM HAVING INFLUENCE IN LAOS LED PEKING TO EXPRESS ITS NEGATIVE VIEW OF
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HANOI'S POLICIES IN BLUNT TERMS.

12. QTE THE U.S. EMBASSY IN THAILAND BELIEVES HANOI HAS BEEN CHASTENED BY ITS CONFRONTATION WITH CHINA AND IS "FESIROUS" OF ENDING HHE CONFRONTATION. AN END TO THE FEUF WOULD LEAD TO RELISF OF THE PROBLEM OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN VIETNAM. HANOI, THE U.S. EMBASSY BELIEVES, WAS ALSO "FRIGHTENED" BY THE DEVELOPMENTS. AS A RESULT IT WILL LIKELY ACH WITH "GREATER CIRCUMSPECTION" IN TRYING TO ACHIEVE IOS "APPARENT OBJECTIVE" OF TOPPLING THE POL POT REGIME IN CAMBODIA, ALTHOUGH HANOI WOULDN'T ABANDON THE GOAL, THE EMBASSY PREDICTED. CHINA IS SIDING WITH CAMBODIA. ACCOMMODAHING PEKING

13. QTE MR. WHITEHOUSE'S CABLE SAID THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFRONTATION COULDN'H BE PREDICTED. BUT IT SAID IT EXPECTED HANOI WOULD ATTEMPT TO ACCOMMODAHE PEKING BY ALLOWING ETHNIC CHINESE IN VIETNAM TO LEAVE. BUT IT WOULD LIKELY CONTINUE TO CRITICIZE HARSHLY PEKING'S MOVES AND TO RELOCATE

"CAPITALIST REMNANTS" WITHIN VIETNAM THE COUNTRYSIDE.
THE QUSSTION, MR. WHITEHOUSE SAID, IS WHETHER PEKING
WOULD BE SATISFIED WITH HAVING AROUSED CONCERN IN
HANOI AND WOULD NOW BE WILLING TO RESOLVE THE OVERSEAS
CHINESE ISSUE ANA ALLOW PASSIONS TO SUBSIDE.

14. QTE EVEN THEN, MR. WHITEHOUSE SAID, "EXTREMELY
SERIOUS" DAMAGE TO ELATIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND
CHINA HAS ALREADY OCCURRED, AND IT WILL HAVE "AT BEST"IN
YEARS TO RECTIFY.

15. QTE MEANWHILE, THE FLOW OF REFUGEES TO CHINA FROM
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VIETNAM OPENS UP A NUMBER OF ISSUES,
MR. WHITEHOUSE'S CABLE SAIF. THESE INCLUDE THE TREATMENT
OF BOAT REFUGEES, POSSIBLE FAMILY REUNIFICATIONS AND
OTHER REFUGEE ISSUES "OF MUTUAL INTEREST." MR. WHITEHOUSE
SAIF THE U.S. MIGHT WISH AT SOME POINT TM CONSIDER
DISCUSSING SUCH ISSUES WITH PEKING. HE SAID THAT FOR
ETHNIC CHINESE OF VIETNAMESE NATIMNALITY CHINA COULD
"EVEN BECOME A FIRST COUNTRY OF ASYLUM." HE ADDED
HOWEVER, FOR MOST BOAT REFUGEES-AT LEAST MOST OF THOSE
ESCAPING FROM THE FORMERLY CAPITALIST SOUTH VIETNAM--
CHINA WOULDN'T BE DESIRED AS A COUNTRY OF RESETTLEMENT.
SO MR. WHITEHOUSE SUGGESTED THE U.S. WOULDN'T WANT TO
"SANCHION INVOLUNTARY, PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT" IN CHINA.
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